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ABSTRACT

This paper proceeds through an interdisciplinary unit of inquiry-based instruction, using the Vietnam War combat novel or memoir as a coming of age narrative, the classic thematic structure of the "bildungsroman." The paper discusses several key inquiry activities and asks readers to focus on two other key inquiry activities to help illustrate how the activities and the unit work and how one activity leads to and connects to another activity. It proposes that the idea of the "bildungsroman" is reflected in the set of key unit questions and problems that provide one basis for an inquiry-based thematic unit. Sample lessons provided in the paper have been set up so that students have a variety of opportunities to interact in different ways, and through their interaction, to build data sets that they will use when they analyze and write about the literature, to develop and practice key thinking strategies, to foster respect for diversity, and to promote habits of mind--critical thinking about literature. (Contains a 54-item selected bibliography. An appendix provides the lesson plans addressed in the paper.) (NKA)

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ED 449 505

Teaching Literature and Writing in the Inquiry Classroom: Inquiry Based Thematic Units

Coming of Age in The Vietnam War: The Vietnam Experience in the Combat Narratives of the Vietnam War: An Inquiry-Based Thematic Unit

"I think that Vietnam is what we had instead of happy childhoods."
Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (1977)

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Teaching Literature and Writing in the Inquiry Classroom: Inquiry Based Thematic Units

By Larry R. Johannessen

Introduction

My colleagues have discussed the features of inquiry-based instruction and shown you some inquiry-based activities. What I am going to do is take you through an entire unit andshow you what an inquiry-based thematic units of instruction might look like.

One advantage to designing instruction in this manner that is that the unit I am going to show you is interdisciplinary. In fact, because the emphasis of inquiry-based instruction is on teaching students to think, to ponder, to question, to problem-solve; or in other words, because the focus is on teaching students the procedural knowledge they need to solve complex problems, rather than on a low level memorization skill, the units are naturally interdisciplinary. This helps students to connect the knowledge they are learning in the unit to what they already know.

What I thought I would do is take you through the unit, discuss a couple of key inquiry activities, and ask you to do one or two other key inquiry activities to help illustrate how the activities and the unit work and how one activity leads to and connects to another activity.

Overall Unit Design and Structure

If you will look at the first page of your handout, you will see how the unit is structured. The title suggests that the Vietnam War Novel or memoir is a coming of age, or narrative of education story, and as such follows, to a large extent, that classic thematic structure of the *bildingsroman*. This idea is reflected in the set of key unit questions and problems that provide one basis for an inquiry based thematic unit.

On the first page of your handout (See Appendix), I have included the six stages of the Vietnam Experience. These stages are:

The Six Stages of the Vietnam Experience:
The Thematic Structure of the Combat Narrative

Stage One: The mystique of pre-induction: The Mystique of Pre-induction or the John Wayne Syndrome.

Stage Two: The Initiation into the Military Culture in Recruit Training

Stage Three: The Dislocation of Arrival in Vietnam--Culture Shock

Stage Four: The Confrontation with Mortality in the First Firefight

Stage Five: Experience and Consideration: a) confronting the moral dilemma; b) from innocence to experience and consideration; or c) from innocence to numbness and madness.

Stage Six: The Phenomenon of Coming Home: How to live with the legacies of the war, with the guilt, the loss of faith, the loss of innocence?

Putting It Together: Central Meaning:

Unit Sequence

What follows these key questions, or six stages of the Vietnam Experience, is the unit sequence. I have provided, ten lessons, and the lessons are in shortened form with a list of objectives, materials, description of procedures and follow up activities. In just a moment, I'll take you through the lessons and stop to examine some of them in depth and actually have you do one or two of the activities that I have provided after the lessons in your handout.

Lesson #1: "Thinking about the Vietnam War" Opinionnaire

If you will turn to the first two pages following the lessons, I'll take you through this first inquiry lesson and show you how this activity works in the classroom and how this type of activity engages students in the literature they are about to read, raises key unit questions andproblems, introduces students to some aspects of the Vietnam Experience,

and prepares them for problems they will encounter in their reading and writing. In other words, it introduces students to the unit and what they will be doing in the unit.

The "Thinking about the Vietnam War" opinionnaire presents students with a central problem that guides their investigation. Students are asked to agree or disagree with a series of generalizations about the Vietnam War that focus on some of the problematic aspects of the war. This particular activity does not require students to gather data, it relies on students' ideas and opinions about the war. It allows students varying degrees of agreement or disagreement with each statement. A number of statements on the opinionnaire are keyed to ideas and themes students will encounter in their reading and the stages of the Vietnam Experience.

I have them fill out the opinionnaire on their own. Then, I compile the results on the board, but to keep this step simple, I merely ask for students who agreed and strongly agreed to raise their hands and then for students who disagreed or strongly disagreed to raise their hands for each statement. Then, beginning with the statements for which there is the most disagreement, I lead a class discussion that focuses on students' responses to each statement. I encourage students to explain the reasoning behind their responses and to debate differing opinions. Since the statements on the opinionnaire require students to take a stand, a lively discussion invariably ensues.

An interesting modification of the procedures I have described is to have students meet in small groups after completing the opinionnaire on their own and have them try to reach a consensus on their responses before the whole class discussion.

The disagreement over the statements that is created in the classroom is an important factor in interesting or engaging students in the literature. At the end of the discussion of the opinionnaire, the teacher might use the disagreement with a statement like, "I see that we have considerable disagreement over statements #3 and #10. I want you to read these these two stories [see lesson #2--'The Centurion' and 'We Have Met the Enemy']--and find out which viewpoint is correct." Students are motivated to read because they want to

find out if their view of Rambo is correct. In other words, the activity gets students thinking about the issue raised in the two statements, and encourages them to seek a solution by reading the literature.

A second purpose of the opinionnaire and the follow-up discussion is to create interest in the characters and and themes in the stories students are about to read. Items #12 and #14 (read statements), for example, relate to one aspect of the problem faced by the narrator of "Centurion." The officers in his unit randomly pull three old men out of a hut, tie them up, gag them, and then tie them to saplings in the center of the unit's perimeter, using the logic that the enemy guerrillas will not attack that night because they have taken their fathers prisoner. The narrator feels compassion for the old men. He thinks they may be innocent and knows that in the morning they will be tortured for information about the enemy. Yet, he does almost nothing to help them. He seems to be unable to do anything significant about the brutality of the incident, accepting it as the price of survival in a crazy war.

Student responses to the items on the opinionnaire usually indicate that many of them believe that a person can do the right thing, not harm innocent civilians, and still survive in war. O'Brien suggests that in the Vietnam War, morality and compassion for innocent civilians may have to take a back seat when survival is at stake. Through the discussion, not just deciding if they agree or disagree with these statements on the opinionnaire, students begin to question some of their initial responses and are motivated to find out how characters will deal with these issues in the stories.

One way that the activity helps prepare students for what the literature of war tries to say about the realities of war is related to the sterotyped views students have about war. Many students have an oversimplified good-guys-against-the-bad-guys image of the war. In the discussion of the opinionnaire, students are often surprised to discover that some of their peers do not find the Rambo image accurate or desirable. In addition, in discussing statement #11, "The Soldier above all other people, prays for peace, for he must suffer and

bear the deepest wounds and scars of war," some student inevitably wonders, "This is in quotes, who said it?" If no one in the class knows, I reveal that the statement was made by General Douglas MacArthur, one of America's greatest generals. Students are very surprised by this, and as we discuss why MacArthur might have made such a statement, students begin to wonder if war is as romantic as the images and myths of Hollywood's version of the Vietnam War. These statements, and others on the opinionnaire, help students come to the literature with a framework or context that will better enable them to understand the stories they are about to read. They don't need to know the history of the Vietnam War.

One other interesting aspect of how the opinionnaire works, how it gets students to think, or inquire, and begin to question some of their initial responses, involves the way some of the statements are set up. In marking their answers, students, without realizing it, often contradict themselves. For example, it is not uncommon for a student to agree with statements #14 and #8 (read statements). As the discussion develops, however, students often realize (on their own or as a result of their peers pointing it out) that they have a contradiction in thought. It is not uncommon for one students to tell another, "How can you say it is never right to kill another person when you just got through saying that when your own survival is at stake, you can't worry about harming or killing innocent civilians." These statements encourage disagreement or discussion and get students thinking about the issues and themes in the literature in the unit.

I often have students compile a list of what they think the elements are of the soldier's experiences in the war. Then, as we move through the unit, we come back to our list and revise it in light of what they find in their reading. Most often students are able to identify fairly accurately two or three key aspects of the Vietnam Experience through this activity.

After discussing most or all of the statements on the opinionnaire, I often have students do some short writing. The idea is that as an inquiry activity it is important that

students do something with the thinking they have been doing. One possible assignment is to have students write a paragraph defending their choices for the key elements of a soldier's experiences. Often the discussion ends with considerable disagreement over a few of the statements from the opinionnaire. I sometimes have students write a brief paragraph defending their choice for why the agree or disagree with one of the statements on the opinionnaire that we had trouble with in the class discussion.

Both of these assignments mirror what I am going to be asking students to do when I ask them to read Vietnam War Literature, make interpretations of their reading, and write analytical compositions of their interpretations. This inquiry activity, then, is an opportunity for them to develop and practice thinking strategies that they will be using in the unit.

Lesson #2: The Vietnam Experience in poetry and short stories

In this lesson students are introduced to the stages of the Vietnam Experience through the literature they study in this lesson (the literature is not included with this paper). In addition, students analyze poetry and short stories, and discuss and attempt to define some of the key aspects of the Vietnam Experience.

After students have discussed the statements on the opinionnaire, I have them read "We Have Met The Enemy" and "Centurion." I then divide them into small groups and give them a set of discussion questions on the two stories. The questions ask students to imagine how the characters in each story would have reacted had they been in the situation that the other characters from the other story were in. This forces students to consider some of the difficult circumstances soldiers had to deal with in the Vietnam War. I then ask students are asked to return to the opinionnaire and respond to the statements as they think the main characters in the stories would respond.

As a follow up, I ask students to write a composition arguing how one of the authors would respond to two or three of the statements on the opinionnaire based on

evidence from the story. Another possible assignment is to give students another story to read, "Young Man in Vietnam," and write an analysis of what the author is saying about the Vietnam War.

The next step is to have students read and analyze some poetry and try to determine some of the elements of the Vietnam Experience. I pass out a packet of poems. The poems have been carefully selected to represent various aspects of the Vietnam Experience. I begin by reading the first poem in the packet aloud, "Fragment: 5 September 1967." Then, I lead a class discussion focusing on the experience described in the poem. The poem highlights the youth of the soldiers, and their loss of innocence when they confront death in what is perhaps their first firefight. Students then examine the remaining poems in small groups. In their groups, students examine the poems using some of the key unit questions. When the groups finish, the teacher leads a discussion of the poems, and the class generates a list of some of the elements of the Vietnam Experience.

As a follow up, I give students another poem, and ask them to read it and determine the key element of the Vietnam Experience. While the other poems focus on the horrors of combat, this one focuses on the phenomenon of coming home from the war. Students are applying the analytical skills they learned in a new situation and on their own.

Lesson #3: Understanding the War through the Arts

This lesson is designed to engage students in experiencing the power of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., and to introduce learning about the war and literature through the arts. Students also do research on the arts of the war, and do an oral report on the arts of the war and relate it to the literature. Prior to the lesson I put together slides of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. and letters that have been left at the memorial.

I start the lesson by showing a series of slides of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and I read selections from letters left at the memorial. I lead a class discussion challenging

students to react to what they are seeing and hearing. Through this activity, students come to see the impact that the art that has emerged in response to the war has on them. After discussing student reactions to the slides I show and letters I read, I inform the class that they will be doing oral reports on the music, dance, art, theater, and photography of the war and that we will be studying some of the literature written about the war. I explain that just as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial had a powerful impact on them, they will be studying some of the arts to see how it affects them and how this art is reflected in the literature.

Then, I pass out the assignment sheet, "The Arts and the Vietnam War" (See Appendix). After going over the assignment and topics, I give students some time to think about them before picking one. While students might do this assignment on their own, I have them do it in pairs or small groups because the school and/or local libraries may not have enough materials for every student in a class. I usually assign students to pairs or small groups based on their interest in particular topics. The final reports are due while the class is reading literature dealing with the war.

This activity works in a number of ways. First, many of the thirteen topics have tremendous appeal to students. For example, students who are interested in rock-and-roll are fascinated to discover how this music reflects the sentiments of the anti-war movement during the 1960s and early 70s. In their reports they note that draft resistance became a favorite theme in songs such as Arlo Guthrie's "Alice's Restaurant" and Phil Ochs's "I Ain't Marchin' Anymore." They are equally fascinated to discover how the music of Bruce Springsteen and others reflect the changing attitudes of Americans toward those who served in Vietnam. In addition, as they examine the music in light of the literature they are studying, they discover a number of important connections. For example, in reading Tim O'Brien's memoir *If I Die in a Combat Zone*, they note that O'Brien was opposed to the war and yet rejected the call by the anti-war movement to resist the draft or desert the military. It is much easier for students to understand O'Brien's opposition to the war as a

result of the connections they make between the popular music of the day and the attitudes of many young people concerning the the war in Vietnam. They also note that while his memoir is not necessarily an anti-war book, it nevertheless asks readers to consider whether the war was worth the cost. Some students point out that his change in attitude towards those who fought in the war is reminiscent of the point of view reflected in songs such as Billy Joel's "Goodnight Saigon" and Huey Lewis's "Walking on a Thin Line." Students are able to connect the literature with art and see how these in turn reflect the ideological civil war that raged across the land and led to a questioning of the national character. In addition, they see how the art and literature speak to the aftermath of the war and how the war continues to have an impact on their lives. (See for example, Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the U.S.A." and Bobbie Ann Mason's *In Country*, which deal with some of the legacies--Mason uses the song as a frame for her story and Bruce Springsteen serves as a central image in the novel.)

Studying the art of the Vietnam War has other rewards as well. For example, one pair of students who began looking at films produced in the late 1970's were very upset to discover that early post-Vietnam films such as "Taxi Driver" portrayed Vietnam veterans as psychopaths. This led them to examine later films such as "Uncommon Valor" and Sylvester Stalone's Rambo films in an attempt to understand the change in attitude toward Vietnam veterans. They were able to see how films reflect public attitudes and sentiments and how they play an important role in cultural myth-making. Ultimately, they were able to apply their knowledge to Bobbie Ann Mason's novel *In Country*. They were better able to understand the characters, particularly the Vietnam veterans, in her novel.

Another important benefit of having students study this art is that it gives students an opportunity to respond in English class in ways other than through linguistic expression. As Smagorinsky (1991) argues, bringing the arts into the English classroom is one way to provide students whose linguistic intelligence might be the weakest in their repertoire other vehicles through which to communicate understanding. Further, studying

the arts enables students to transport knowledge gained in one domain to another. They begin to see how the different subject areas are related.

In a follow-up class discussion of the Vietnam War and the arts, I ask students to draw conclusions. Many are often quick to point out how the war politicized American fine artists and how the art in recent years, like the literature that deals with the war, seems to be an attempt at healing some of the wounds of the war. However, some students note that controversies still exist. For example, students who reported on the visual art note that while popular films such as the Chuck Norris "Missing in Action" films portray the Vietnam veteran as a warrior-hero, many of the paintings, photographs and sculptures created by Vietnam veterans show a different view. They point to the exhibit "Vietnam: Reflexes and Reflections," which toured the country in the 1980s, and is now on permanent display in Chicago at the **Vietnam Veterans Art Museum,** 1801 S. Indiana Ave., Chicago. Hours: 11 to 6 daily, open till 9 p.m. on Wednesday. Phone: [312] 326-0270) as an example of the art produced by veterans that shows the agony of the veterans and the Vietnamese people. "This art," one student said, "reveals that the veterans don't feel like heroes, and it doesn't show any victory like some of the popular films." In addition, students who reported on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial discuss some of the controversies over the memorial. They point to the fact that the nation could not agree on a single memorial to the Vietnam War in Washington. It needed both the somber wall, engraved with the names of the fallen, and a statue of three soldiers, innocents who look one year out of high school. This discussion reveals the importance of having students study the art of the Vietnam War. Students have gained a sophisticated understanding of the role of art in society.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

As a follow-up activity, I often ask students to relate the art they have researched and reported on orally to the literature we have studied in class. One of my college

freshmen who studied how the war has been portrayed by American and Vietnamese artists (see for example, *As Seen By Both Sides: American and Vietnamese Artists Look at the War*, by C. David Thomas, Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991) relates how veteran artists saw the war to Philip Caputo's memoir, *A Rumor of War*. "The pain and the sadness expressed in many of the paintings by Vietnam veterans," she writes, "remind me of Caputo's hollow comment when he leaves Vietnam: 'We had done nothing more than endure. We had survived, and that was our only victory' (1977, 320). There are no victory parades for Caputo or for these artists. There is only survival and pain and sadness."

Another student who studied the music of soldiers who served in Vietnam notes how their songs allowed the singers to express their fear or sadness in acceptable ways and relates these to James Webb's novel Fields of Fire . "A song like 'Will There Be a Tomorrow?'"(from *In Country: Folk Songs of Americans in the Vietnam War*. Flying Fish, 1991), describes a pilot's fear of dying in a strange land before he flies a mission into Laos. This song," the student goes on to say, "reminds her of what [the character of] Goodrich does before his platoon is scheduled to go out on a major operation. He sings a series of protest and other popular songs for the platoon that capture the frustrations, bitterness and agony that he and the rest of the men in the platoon feel after months in the bush and the fear that they all feel in anticipation of the upcoming operation" (1978, 315-6).

Finally, a student who studied the Vietnam Veterans Memorial made this very insightful assessment of the ending of Bobbie Ann Mason's powerful novel, *In Country* and the Memorial:

> But there is hope at the end of the novel. This comes about by the reconciliation that comes to Sam, Emmett, and the nation. Sam comes to realize her searching is related to the fact that part of herself died with her father, and she comes to accept that she cannot really know the whole truth about her father, what he was like and how he died. Emmett finds reconciliation when he studies his buddies' names on the wall. "He sits there cross-legged in front of the wall, and slowly his face bursts into a smile like flames" (1989, 352). Like the Phoenix bird, Emmett will rise from the ashes of his dead life. The wall itself, with the millions of visitors yearly, pushes forward the nation's reconciliation. Most of the

tourists are silent and reverent at our country's Wailing Wall. Through it the country is experiencing a healing catharsis.

These excerpts illustrate the powerful impact that the art of the war can have on students and how studying the art can help them make meaning out of the literature. After students have studied the art and literature of the Vietnam War, they have a much more sophisticated understanding of the war and the literature and art that deals with the war. Allowing students to express themselves in these other areas of intelligence enables them to emerge as competent in making meaning. This competence has beneficial effects on their self-concepts, and what they produce is often quite sophisticated and effective as these excerpts demonstrate.

I have limited time today, so I am going to I am going to just say a few words about the next three lessons. "Lesson #4: Mines and Booby Traps Simulation" is an important inquiry lesson in that students experience key elements of what it was like to be a soldier fighting in Vietnam. This simulation approximates what it was like to walk on patrols in enemy territory and worry about mines and booby-traps. In "Lesson #5: The Experience of Vietnam" and "Lesson #6: The Vietnam Experience in a non-fiction narratives or oral history of the war" students begin to synthesize what they are learning and apply what they are learning to the literature. In Lesson #5 students read two short stories and apply what they have learned so far in the unit, particularly what they experienced in the simulation activity. In Lesson #6 students apply what they have learned to non-fiction narratives or an oral history.

Lesson #7: One Picture Says 40,000 Words

(Read the assignment/problem: See below and Appendix.) I'm going to ask you to do the first part of this activity pretty much as I would have students do it to give you a clearer sense for how this activity works and how it follows the features of inquiry that Tom discussed. I begin by passing out the three pages in your handout. Then, I take students through the directions. (Read directions.)

One Picture Says 40,000 Words

The Problem:

In hopes of promoting the reading of books among school-age children, the National Library Association (NLA) has initiated "National Book Month," Naming November as the target month. The NLA has invited publishers of popular texts to produce attractive posters to encourage students to read their books. The publishers have much to gain from having their posters appear in school and public libraries.

The publisher of Walter Dean Myers'' popular Vietnam War novel, *Fallen Angels* has been working on its poster contribution. The publisher's marketing department has selected four graphic images from which a management team will select one image or a set of images to represent the novel and appeal to high school age students to read it.

Critical Comments and Images:

See the attached images, and study the larger color reproductions to provide the information necessary to make your decision. (I will show you large versions of the images attached to this activity.) (These images are available from the following sources: Vietnam War/Historical Text Archive/http://www.msstate.edu/Archives/History/USA/Vietnam/Vietnam.html and Vietnam War Internet Project: INDEX of Vietnam Graphics Files/http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/shwv/imagetop.html) See also the various capsule descriptions of the text that various critics and commentators have offered.

Selection Criteria:

The management team will rely on more than their gut reactions either to select one image from among the four samples, or to choose up to four images to represent the essence of *Fallen Angeles*. The following guidelines should influence the team decision:

1. This image or images should accurately represent the content of the novel.
2. The image or images should have visual appeal to the young reader.

3. The image or images should have the potential to influence adolescents to read the novel.
4. The image or images should follow sound design principles.

Directions:

1. Working on your own, closely study the four sample pictures to judge for yourself which would be the best selection. Be prepared to explain to others why you selected the one(s) you did.
2. Meet with two or three members of your class to discuss your observations. As members of the management team, you must come to a group decision, even though there will be some disagreement among the group. Be prepared to report to the whole class: Which image(s) did you select? How did you arrive at your decision? If there was disagreement within your group, what was the basis for the disagreement?
3. A spokesperson from each group will share the group decision and rationale. Everyone is invited to challenge the reported decisions and/or explanations. Each group will have an opportunity to respond to challenges or questions. Carefully note decisions, explanations, challenges, and responses. Use all comments as a means for measuring the logic, accuracy, and clarity of your own position.
4. Produce a written response to the problem. See the guidelines below.

(We are not going to do the written response today, but as you will see that would be the logical next step in this inquiry activity.)

Written Response:

Report your own decision in a memo addressed to Ms. Sang Nguyen-Westmoreland, Director of Marketing. Your memo should include the following:

1. Offer a statement about the problem you've studied, and make an assertion about which image or images should be selected.

2. Provide a complete rationale for your decision. Refer to the selection criteria and point out details from the image which show that it meets the criteria. Keep challenges in mind so that you can adequately respond to any doubts.
3. Assess the remaining choices. If other thinkers have opposed your view, explain what they chose, why they chose it, and what is lacking in their choice.
4. Summarize your decision.

Critical Comments about Walter Dean Myers' *Fallen Angels*

1. A coming of age tale for young adults set in the trenches of the Vietnam War in the late 1960s, Fallen Angels is the story of Richard Perry, a Harlem teenager who volunteers for the service when his dream of attending college falls through. Sent to the front lines, Perry and his platoon come face-to-face with the Vietcong and the real horror of warfare. But violence and death aren't the only hardships. As Perry struggles to find virtue in himself and his comrades, he questions why black troops are given the most dangerous assignments, and why the U.S. is there at all.
2. Rich in characters and authentic in detail, *Fallen Angels* tells the story of a 17-year-old black teenager's tour of duty in Vietnam in 1967. With its gritty and authentic depiction of the brutality of war it has been acclaimed by critics and young adult readers alike.
3. This book is about Rich Perry (main character) and his soldier buddies who were in his platoon. It talks about what soldiers had to do in order for them to stay alive and survive in the "bush." Whenever Rich and his platoon are in a fire fight, it makes you feel like you were there taking a video or taking pictures while they were fighting their enemies. This book really gets very exciting, especially in the parts when Rich and two other soldier buddies almost died. There is so much action in this book it makes Rambo look like Dumbo. It gets interesting whenever Rich and his platoon are just kicking back because they always make fun of each other. When they make fun of each other, it makes them feel like they are not even at war and it also makes them forget about what they've experienced while in a fire fight.

4. A very powerful Vietnam War novel written for teenagers, *Fallen Angels* tells the story of Richie Perry, 17, who enlists to fight in Vietnam as a way out of a dead-end life in Harlem. He experiences all of the horrors of war as well as the racial conflict that existed among American troops. Richie questions his religious faith and moral values.

I would like you to do step #1 in the directions at this time. Let me show you better versions of the four images, and as I do think about which one or ones you would select and be prepared to explain why you made the selections that you did. (The color images are not included with this paper, but are available at the internet addresses cited above.)

Now, if you would, meet with two or three people sitting around you and try to come to a group decision. Again, I'm going to ask you to discuss your decision and the process you went through with all of us when we are finished.

Lead discussion.

1. Which image or images did you select? Why?
2. Does anyone have a different view? What was your selection? Why?
3. How did you arrive at your decision?
4. Did your group disagree on anything? Why?

The next step would be to have students write their decision following the guidelines in the handout.

Here's how this activity illustrates the features of inquiry that Tom mentioned. (See OT if needed.) This activity is designed around a central, real world problem that guides the problem-solving of students, and it has no specified answer. Students might come up with a number of different possible answers based on how they would meet the criteria and their own creativity. I have attempted to provide a real-world context for this particular problem. All of the data necessary for students to pose significant questions and work on the problem is provided. The activity is structured so that students must engage in critical thinking strategies specifically related to the unit--the students are thinking about the nature

of the Vietnam Experience as portrayed in this YA novel, and it allows them to develop and apply it in a different manner than they have anywhere else in the unit. The activity is structures so that students have the opportunity to interact in small group and whole class discussions. Ultimately, students will have to produce a written report and they are going to have to apply what they learn here in subsequent lessons in the unit. This activity helps students learn and practice the thinking strategies necessary for students to read and analyze Vietnam War combat narratives--the key unit questions and problems and the stages of the Vietnam Experience.

Lesson #8: Case Study: Platoon Commander's Dilemma

I'd like you to take a look at Lesson #8 because I would very much like to do this inquiry activity with you for the same reasons I mentioned in regards to lesson #7. The Platoon Commander's Dilemma is a case study inquiry activity that is designed to engage students' interests, extend their understanding of the moral dilemma (stage 5) that is a major feature of the Vietnam War Combat Narrative, or coming of age experience, and raise key unit questions.

It is also set up to prepare students for the kind of modern warfare soldiers have to deal with in war, as well as for some the themes and issues that they will encounter as they read a major work, and because it focuses on the moral dilemma that the major character has to face in the narrative and also helps them to understand the characters. In the modern war novel there are at least two things converge to create a moral dilemma for soldier's who fight in war. First, there is movement from innocence through experience, which involves "an agonizing consideration of the realities and ironies of war," which is like Marlow's confronting "the horror" or moral conflict and psychic journey in Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness*. Secondly, the brutal and impersonal nature of modern war (along with other factors) combined to create very high levels of frustration and battle stress for soldiers. The problem is that students sometimes have difficulty understanding why some

of the soldiers they read about seem to be or seem to become so callous toward civilians and the enemy. As one soldier writes in a letter home in *Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam* (1986): "After awhile, instead of a yellow streak, you develop a mean streak"; or, as another soldier said in a letter home: "[After awhile,] it is so easy to kill in a war." "The Platoon Commander's Dilemma" activity (p.) is designed to help students with this particularly troubling aspect of a soldier's education or movement from innocence to experience. Another way to think about it is that at some point every soldier has to confront a moral choice that is a key part of his or her experience.

I would like you to do this activity somewhat as I have students do it. Normally, I would pass this out to students just prior to starting or just after we have started a major combat narrative. First, let us read over the case together (read the case aloud). **Now, I would like you all to spend the next ten minutes or so writing out your answers to the questions posed at the end.** (Give participants time to write out answers and get some paper to write on.) It is really important that you do the writing. Thank you, I appreciate it. **(Or, have participants meet in small groups to discuss the questions and come up with a group answer that they will present to the class.)**

Now, I would like to ask a few of you to read your compositions (or present your answers that you came up with in your groups), and then we'll spend a few minutes talking about your responses.

Would someone read their composition? Would someone else read theirs that said something different?

Someone else?

Could I have someone else read theirs who has a different viewpoint?

Did anyone else come up with a different solution? Could you read yours?

Let's talk about some of your solutions to this problem. (Lead discussion using the following discussion questions as a guide) (Put up overhead of questions):

"The Platoon Commander's Dilemma": Discussion Questions

1. If Pickett fails to shoot, has he committed a crime? Why or why not?
2. If Pickett fails to shoot, is he being disloyal to the men in his platoon, especially those who died? Why or why not?
3. If Pickett shoots, has he committed a crime? Why or why not?
4. If Pickett decides to shoot the woman and child, and it turns out that they are innocent, do you think he has done anything wrong? Why or why not?
5. What do you think of what Juarez tells Pickett? Why?
6. If Pickett fails to shoot, how might the men in Pickett's platoon react? Why?
7. If Picket shoots, how might the men in Pickett's platoon react? Why?
8. Are the woman and her son just two innocent civilians caught in a bad situation, or are they guerrilla soldiers? How do you know?
9. What do you think the morals of war are? What criterion can someone use to live by in war?

Once all students that want to have had a chance to read their paper and participate in the discussion, I tell them that we are going to be reading a major Vietnam War Combat novel and that the characters in the work have to confront similar situations, and that they should examine how they react in these situations, and try to determine the impact that these experiences have on characters and what the author is trying to tell us about the Vietnam War and war in general through these situations.

As a variation on the format I outlined for you, after students have written out their responses, you might have them meet in small groups to read their compositions, and you might have them either pick one composition that they will read to the class, or have them

discuss their responses and try to reach a consensus as to their answers to the questions prior to the whole class discussion.

As I said, this activity helps to prepare students for the themes and issues that they will encounter in their reading and also helps them to understand the characters. It also helps students learn the thinking skills and strategies involved in argumentation, as well as skills and strategies that are important to other subject areas such as history and ethics.

How is this an inquiry activity? (See OT of features.) The case study provides a meaningful, central problem that guides students' thinking, and the problem has no easy answer. I have attempted to include details in the case study that will provide a tangible and recognizable context for the problem. In fact, The scenario I created here for the case is sort of a combination of a similar scene in Oliver Stone's film *Platoon*, and the My Lai massacre that occurred during the Vietnam War, and as you may recall it involved a Captain Medina and Lt. Calley. I have provided all of the data necessary for students to think about and work on the problem. The problem is structured so that students are utilizing thinking strategies necessary to work on the problem and that they will need to read and interpret the novel we are about to read, and the activity also engages them in the thinking strategies involved in argument, skills that I will want them to use when they write about a Vietnam War Combat Narrative. I have set the activity up so that they interact in small group and/or whole class discussion. Students write about the case as part of the activity, and finally, students will have to use these skills in subsequent lessons. Most important, the strategies they learn here have direct applicability whenever they read a modern war novel because every protagonist must face a moral choice.

Again, because of time limitations, let just say about "Lesson #9: The Vietnam Experience in a Major Work" that students read a major work of literature and apply everything they have learned so far in the unit, especially what they learned through doing "Platoon Commander's Dilemma" and how that applies to the coming of age experience.

The last lesson, "Lesson #10: Assessment," is concerned with the ultimate test of an inquiry unit, which is to what extent are students able to apply what they have learned in an unfamiliar situation? In this lesson, students are given a short work they have not seen and are asked to write an analysis of the work utilizing all that they have learned about Vietnam War Combat Narratives.

How is this an inquiry unit?

How is this inquiry? The unit is structured so that in the early lessons students tackle different aspects of the coming of age theme until they have mastered the stages, and then they apply what they have learned in later lessons so that by the end, they are able to tackle a meaningful, central problem on their own: What is the coming of age experience in this particular work of Vietnam Combat Literature? And they will be able to analyze this work and determine how or to what extent it meets the criteria for this type of literature. By the end, students must attempt to define the experience in a major work and aspects of the theme in a work that they read on their own.

There is a tangible and recognizable context for the problem or series of problems: I have limited our study to works that are combat narratives. I have had them tackle the problem or aspects of the problem from a variety of perspectives. By the end of the unit students are able to identify the when, where, and why the problem occurs, the contraints of the problem, and how and why the problem is significant.

I have set up the lessons so that students work with different kinds of data, and I have gradually pulled away scaffolding so that by the end students must rely on their own knowledge of the theme and apply what they have learned. They look for data in the literature to see if it meets the cricteria for a coming of age narrative.

I have structured the unit so that they are learning and practicing the the essential thinking strategies necessary to work on the coming of age theme in Vietnam War literature. Again, I structured the lessons, so that in early lessons they tackle a single

aspect of the theme, and then in later lessons they must attempt to use all that they know about the stages of the coming age combat narrative. They learn and practice the thinking skills necessary to read and interpret the literature and write about the literature.

I have set up the lessons so that students have a variety of opportunities to interact in different ways and through their interaction to guild data sets that they will use when they analyze and write about the literature, to develop and practice key thinking strategies, to foster respect for diversity, and to promote habits of mind--critical thinking about literature.

In individual lessons, and in the last two culminating lessons, the instructions leads to written or oral products or performances. The final lesson asks students to apply what they have learned to an unfamiliar context, and what I am after ultimately is that students will be able to use this knowledge in new situations--when they study the Vietnam War in history, when they see a film or documentary about the war, such as the recent award winning documentary film, "Regret to Inform," that to a certain extent follows this thematic structure, and when they read literature in the future that may have a coming of age theme--a war novel like Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*.

Conclusion

What I have tried to show you is what a complete inquiry unit looks like and what some of the inquiry activities are like in a complete unit. I think what is most important here is what inquiry teaching attempts to do or accomplish. First, the goal of inquiry teaching is exactly what Piaget set as the goal of education: "The principle goal of education is to create men who are capable of doing new things, not simply of repeating what other generations have done."

As Donald C. Orlich (1998) says, inqury teaching is difficult to define in nonoperational terms: He maintains that

> Inquiry teaching requires a high degree of interaction among the learner, the teacher, the materials, the context, and the environment. Perhaps the most crucial

> aspect of the inquiry method is that it allows both student and teacher to become persistent askers, seekers, interogators, questioners, and ponderers. The end result occurs when your students pose the question every Nobel Prize winner has asked: "I wonder what would happen if…?" (pp. 291-292)

This is the ultimate goal of inquiry teaching.

APPENDIX

MODEL INQUIRY-BASED THEMATIC UNIT WITH SOME KEY ACTIVITIES

Coming of Age in The Vietnam War:
The Vietnam Experience in the Combat Narratives of the Vietnam War: An Inquiry-Based Thematic Unit

Key Unit Questions and Problems:
The Vietnam (Coming of Age) Experience in Combat Narratives of the Vietnam War

The Six Stages of the Vietnam Experience: The Thematic Structure of the Combat Narrative

Stage One: The mystique of pre-induction: The Mystique of Pre-induction or the John Wayne Syndrome.

What are the main character's attitudes toward war? Patriotism? Technology?
What is his or her attitude toward war and/or the war in Vietnam?
What are major influences on the main character's attitudes?
Why does he or she decide to go to war?

Stage Two: The Initiation into the Military Culture in Recruit Training

What difficulties does the main character have adjusting to life in the military?
What are significant experiences in recruit training? Why?
How does the main character change as a result of recruit training?
How does recruit training attempt to prepare young people for the war in Vietnam? Is it effective? Why or why not?

Stage Three: The Dislocation of Arrival in Vietnam--Culture Shock

How does the main character travel to Vietnam?
What are his or her initial experiences upon arrival in country?
How does he or she react to these experiences?
How are the Vietnamese portrayed?

Stage Four: The Confrontation with Mortality in the First Firefight

How does the main character react the first time in combat?
What impact does this experience have on the main character?
What are the concerns of the main character and others around him or her?

Stage Five: Experience and Consideration: a) confronting the moral dilemma; b) from innocence to experience and consideration; or c) from innocence to numbness and madness.

How and why do the concerns of the characters change over time?
What is the main character's attitude toward the war, the military, America, and the Vietnamese? How and why has his or her attitude changed?
What experiences have had an impact on the main characters? Why?
What difficult moral choices does the main character consider? How does s/he respond? Why?

Stage Six: The Phenomenon of Coming Home: How to live with the legacies of the war, with the guilt, the loss of faith, the loss of innocence?

How does the main character leave Vietnam? What is his or her reaction to leaving?
What is the main character's return to the United States like?
How has the main character changed? What is his or her attitude toward the war? Has it changed? If so, how and why? If not, why not?
How do people at home treat the main character? Why?

Putting It Together: Central Meaning:

What is the author telling readers about the Vietnam War and/or war?
What is the author saying about courage? Friendship? War as a ritual?
What is the author saying about coming of age in the Vietnam War? What is the Vietnam Experience?

Unit Sequence

Lesson #1: Introductory Activity: Vietnam War Opinionnaire

Objectives: Engage students' in the unit topic
Raise key questions and problems
Introduce some of the elements of the Vietnam Experience

Materials: "Thinking about the Vietnam War" Twenty Statements Opinionnaire

Description: Students are asked to agree or disagree with a series of statements (generalizations) which have been designed to elicit problematic aspects of the war in Vietnam, especially those related to the experiences of soldiers who fought in the war. Students first respond to the statements on their own, and then the teacher guides the class in a whole class discussion of the areas of disagreement. A final step would be for students to decide what they think the most important elements of a soldier's experience are.

Follow up: Students might write a paragraph defending their choices for the key elements of a soldier's experiences.

Lesson #2: The Vietnam Experience in poetry and short stories

Objectives: Develop an understanding of some elements of the Vietnam Experience through analyzing poetry and short stories
*Read Several poems and short stories
*Through oral and written responses, debate and then determine and define some of the key aspects of the Vietnam Experience.

Materials: A packet of Vietnam War combat poems: "Fragment: 5 September 1967" by W. D . Ehrhart, "APO 96225" by Larry Rottman, "Hunting" by W. D. Ehrhart, "Sometime After Breakfast" by Steven P. Smith, "The Man in Black" by Frank A. Cross, Jr., "The Insert" by R. L. Barth, "Vietnam Era Vet" by Vince Gotera. One poem, "Coming Home" by W. D. Ehrhart, is not part of the packet.
Short stores: "The Centurion" by Tim O'Brien, "We Have Met The Enemy" by Robin Moore, "Young Man in Vietnam" by Charles Coe

Description I: After students have discussed the statements on the opinionnaire, have them read "We Have Met The Enemy" and "Centurion." They are divided into small groups and given a set of discussion questions on the two stories. The questions ask students to imagine how the characters in each story would reacted had they been in the situation that the other characters from the other story were in. This forces students to consider some of the difficult circumstances soldiers had to deal with in the Vietnam War. Students are asked to return to the opinionnaire and respond to the statements as they think the main characters in the stories would respond.

Follow-up I: Students are asked to write a composition arguing how one of the authors would respond to two or three of the statements on the opinionnaire based on evidence from the story. Another possible assignment is to give students another story to read, "Young Man in Vietnam," and write an analysis of what the author is saying about the Vietnam War.

Description II: The poems have been carefully selected to represent various aspects of the Vietnam Experience. The teacher reads the first poem in the packet aloud, "Fragment: 5 September 1967." The teacher leads a class discussion focusing on the experience described in the poem. The poem highlights the youth of the soldiers, and highlights their loss of innocence when they confront death in what is perhaps their first firefight. Students then examine the remaining poems in small groups. In their groups, students examine the poems using some of the key unit questions. When the groups finish, the teacher leads a discussion of the poems, and the class generates a list of some of the elements of the Vietnam Experience.

Follow up II: Students are given another poem, and asked to read it and determine the key element of the Vietnam Experience. While the other poems focus on the horrors of combat, this one focuses on the phenomenon of coming home from the war. Students are applying the analytical skills they learned in a new situation and on their own.

Lesson #3: Understanding the War through the Arts

Objectives: Engage students in experiencing the power of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. to introduce learning about the war and literature through the arts
Research the arts of the war
Do an oral report on the arts of the war and relate it to the literature

Materials: Slides of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. and letters left at the memorial. "The Arts and the Vietnam War" Assignment sheet.

Description: Students view a series of slides of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the teacher reads selections from letters left at the memorial. The teacher leads a discussion challenging students to react to what they are seeing and hearing. Students come to see the impact that the art that has emerged in response to the war has on them. With their interest ignited, the teacher passes out the the assignment, and working in pairs or small groups students select one of the topics, research how one of the arts has been influenced by the war, and they prepare and give an oral presentation to the class. Students give their reports as the class moves through the unit, and one of their requirements is to relate what they have learned to the literature that the class has studied.

Lesson #4: Mines and Booby Traps Simulation

Objectives: Engage students in experiencing key aspects of the Vietnam Experience
Introduce concept of the cumulative effect of the war
Raise key unit questions

Materials: Coffee cans, fishing line, and other materials, including an appropriate room for creating a simulated Vietnam War combat zone.

Description: Students experience what it was like to be a soldier in Vietnam as they try to find their way through a darkened room that is filled with mines and booby traps. Students experience some of the danger and fear that soldiers faced every day in Vietnam, and the cumulative effect of constantly taking casualties. Students also come to understand the degree to which soldiers in

small units depended on one another for survival. These issues are themes constantly running through many works dealing with the war. In addition, as students discuss their experience and the teacher raises key unit questions they develop a deep understanding of some aspects of the Vietnam Experience that they will be asked to apply when they read the literature. After setting up the room, students are assigned to squads, and each squad has an opportunity to try to get to the other end of the room. If they hit a mine or booby-trap the entire squad is dead. After all the groups have tried to get through the room, the teacher leads a discussion of what the squads experienced, focusing on how they felt and what it must have been like for soldiers in Vietnam.

Follow-up: Instead of an immediate class discussion once the simulation is finished, students might write a composition based on a set of questions about their feelings and reactions to the simulation and key unit questions about what it was like to be a soldier in Vietnam. Then have students share their responses. After doing this activity, students are prepared for dealing with some of the issues and characters they will encounter in the literature because they will be able to relate them to their own experiences and perceptions which they explored through this activity.

Lesson #5: The experience of Vietnam

Objectives: Develop an understanding of the Vietnam Experience through literature
*Read a short story
*Through oral and written responses, apply the concepts learned in the simulation regarding danger, fear, and the cumulative effects the war.

Materials: Short stories: "Night March" by Tim O'Brien, "Extract" by Wayne Karlin, "Medical Evacuation" by Wayne Karlin

Description: Students read a short story like "Night March" by Tim O'Brien that focuses on the concepts introduced in the simulation. After reading the story, students work in small groups answering a set of questions that asks them to apply key unit questions to the story they have read.

Follow-up: Students might be asked to read another short story such as "Extract" or Medical Evacuation" by Wayne Karlin that focuses on the same concepts. Students write an analysis of the short story, applying on their own the concepts they have learned in the simulation.

Lesson #6: The Vietnam Experience in a non-fiction narratives or oral history of the war

Objectives: Develop and extend students understanding of the Vietnam Experience through analysis of a non-fiction narrative or an oral history of the war
*Read the text
*Through oral and written responses, apply what has been learned about the Vietnam Experience
*Extend understanding of key elements of the Vietnam Experience
Raise key unit questions

Materials: *Nam: The Vietnam War in the Words of the Men and Women Who Fought There* by Mark Baker, *Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam*, Dir. by Bill Couturie

Description I: As a class, students read the "Introduction" and first section, "Initiation" of Mark Baker's *Nam*. Then, the teacher leads a class discussion utilizing a set of guide questions that are based on the key unit questions and the reading focuses on the first two stages of the Vietnam Experiences. The teacher then assigns students to read the rest of the oral history and assigns students to small groups to report to the class on a particular section of the book. The groups have a set of generic questions that focus on the themes and relate to a particular stage of the Vietnam Experience. Students give their reports, students formulate conclusions about the war and the nature of the Vietnam Experience.

Follow-up I: Students are asked to write a composition describing one or two aspects of the Vietnam Experience as revealed in the book. They should highlight the key features of the experience. Students might also interview a Vietnam Veteran about his or her experiences in the war an compare them to the stories in the book.

Description II: Students view the award-winning documentary film, *Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam*. The film not only gives a history of the war, but it provides a complete picture of all six stages of the Vietnam Experience on film. After viewing the film, the teacher leads a class discussion of the film, focusing on the key unit questions and the stages of the Vietnam Experience. Also, the teacher should discuss the ending which examines some legacies of the war, ten years after the ending of the war.

Follow-up II: Students select one of three response topics and write a composition that allows them to explore an aspect of the film in more depth utilizing evidence from the film to support their views.

Lesson #7: "One Picture Says 40,000 Words" (Adapted from an activity developed by Tom McCann [1999], "Inquiry-Based Interdisciplinary Lessons")

Objectives: Engage students in a problem that asks students to synthesize and test their knowledge of the Vietnam Experience
Raise key unit questions

Materials: "One Picture Says 40,000 Words" Problem Handout with four images and critical descriptions of the novel, four overhead transparencies of the possible images for the novel.

Description: Students attempt to apply their knowledge of the Vietnam Experience and Vietnam War Literature in a problem that asks them to select an image for a poster that best represents the essence of a novel and will appeal to young readers. The eacher hands out the problem and students read along as the teacher reads the problem. Students are to study the images, capsule descriptions of the novel, and then they pick the image they think is best and why. Students work in groups to discuss and pick the the image and the basis for their selection. The groups share their decision and rationale, and the groups discuss and debate their selections.

Follow-up: Students write a composition explaining which image they picked and why and explain why the other images are not as good or appropriate as the one they selected.

Lesson #8: Case Study: Platoon Commander's Dilemma

Objectives: Engage students' interests
Extend students' understanding of the moral dilemma (stage 5)
Raise key questions

Materials: "Platoon Commander's Dilemma" case study

Description: Although students have some understanding of the difficulties that soldiers faced in Vietnam, this high interest activity is designed to engage them in understanding that perhaps the key aspect of the Vietnam Experience occurs in Stage 5 when the soldier (main character) of the work confronts a moral choice. It is the centerpiece of the coming of age theme, and an important dimension of Vietnam War literature, and indeed, twentieth century war literature. This activity prepares students for the novel they sill read and the moral choice that the main character will face. Students read the case study silently as the teacher read it aloud. Then, students write a composition that answers the questions posed in the case. Then, the teacher has students share their responses with the class and leads a discussion focusing on the moral dilemma the character faces, the choices students made and why.

Lesson #9: The Vietnam Experience in a major work

Objectives: Trace stages of the Vietnam Experience as students read a major combat narrative
Apply key unit questions as they read, including new issues such as confronting a moral choice and how and why the character changes as a result of his experience
Write an essay on the stages of the Vietnam Experience in the novel with emphasis on the moral choice the main character makes and the impact of the choice on the character's growth
*Use textual evidence to support claims about the novel

Materials: Students read one of the major combat narratives such as: Michael Herr's *Dispatches*, Philip Caputo's *A Rumor of War*, Tim O'Brien's *If I Die in a Combat Zone: Box Me Up and Ship Me Home*, *Going After Cacciato*, or *The Things They Carried*, Ron Kovic's *Born on the Fourth of July*, Walter Dean Myers' *Fallen Angels*, or James Webb's *Fields of Fire*. Students view one of the major Vietnam War films such as *Platoon*, *Full-Metal Jacket*, *Apocalypse Now*, or *Hamburger Hill*.

Description: As the class reads and discusses the novel, students apply what they have learned in this new situation. The key problem is that students now trace each of the stages of the Vietnam Experience and must consider the impact of the moral choice on the major character. The teacher may have students consider how the main character would have reacted had he been in the same situation as the main character in the "Platoon Commander's Dilemma" case. Then, students view one of the major Vietnam War films and apply key unit questions and trace the stages of the Vietnam Experience.

Lesson #10: Assessment

Objectives: Students apply their knowledge of the stages of the Vietnam Experience to an unfamiliar work read independently.

Materials: "Ben" by George Davis or "Welcome Home" by Robin Moore

Description: Any true assessment of an inquiry-based thematic unit must require students to demonstrate the ability to read a text, draw appropriate inferences, and apply the key unit concepts independently. Either of these stories work well as a test because it is short enough that students can read it and write a short essay in a single class period, and because it illustrates key aspects of the Vietnam Experience.

THINKING ABOUT THE VIETNAM WAR

Directions: Below is a series of statements. Circle the response which most closely indicates how you feel about the statement. Be prepared to explain your answers.

1. "Cowards die many times before their deaths; the valiant taste of death but once."

   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."

   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. John Rambo is a good image for Americans to have of the Vietnam veteran: he represents all that America stands for and the American soldier in war.

   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. "The only heroes in war are the dead ones."

   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. "My country right or wrong" is not just a slogan--it is every citizen's patriotic duty.

   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. No cause, political or otherwise, is worth dying for.

   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. Most American soldiers participated in acts of brutality against Vietnamese civilians.

   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. It is never right to kill another person.

   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. The soldiers who served in the Vietnam War did so because they were very patriotic.

   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

10. The *Rambo* movies are very bad because they show a distorted view of what war is really like and of what it is like to be a soldier.

    Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

11. "The soldier, above all other people, prays for peace, for he must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war."

    Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

12.The Vietnam War was a guerrilla war; therefore, it is understandable that many Vietnamese civilians suffered as a result of American military actions.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

13.People should never compromise their ideals or beliefs.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

14.For combat soldiers, the difference between death or survival often meant not doing the right or moral thing or worrying about possible harm to innocent civilians.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

15."The men who do well on the average, perhaps with one moment of glory, those men are brave."

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

16.When veterans came home from Vietnam, most Americans treated them as heroes.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

17.Those who avoid the draft or desert and go to some other country should never be given amnesty or allowed to return to the United States.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

18.Many Vietnam veterans believe as one veteran put it: "You can't do what we did [in Vietnam] and then be happy about it. And nobody lets you forget it."

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

19."We've kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all."

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

20.True courage means standing up for your beliefs.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Adapted from Johannessen, Larry R. (1992). *Illumination Rounds: Teaching the Literature of the Vietnam War*. Urbana: NCTE, pp. 145-146.

The Arts and the Vietnam War

Directions: Select one of the following topics, and then using the information you gather, prepare and give an oral presentation that answers the questions posed in your topic. You should also answer the following question: What are the most important things you learned about the Vietnam War from doing your report that you didn't know before you started? In your presentation, you must show the art, photography or other visual works, or play some of the music that is the focus of your report.

1. The protest songs of the 1960s reflect events that were taking place. How do these songs reflect the political controversies over the Vietnam War? How is this music reflected in the literature of the Vietnam War? Which songs and/or artists seem to be most important? Why?
2. Many rock-and-roll songs were popular with GIs who fought in Vietnam. Which rock-and-roll songs and/or artists were most popular with those who served in Vietnam? Why? How is this music reflected in Vietnam War literature? How does this music reflect the political controversies of the time?
3. In the 1960s and early 1970s artists began depicting the war in Vietnam. How do artists like Peter Saul and others portray the Vietnam War? How do these works reflect the political controversies of the time? Which artists and/or works of art seem to be most important? Why? How are these portrayals of the war reflected in Vietnam War literature?
4. Magazines, newspapers, and television brought images of the war into American homes on a daily basis. Some of these images became touchstones for the growing unrest at home over the war. How did television news cameras and photographers portray the war in Vietnam? Which images were most important in terms of the political controversies of the time? How are these images reflected in the literature of the Vietnam War?
5. Classical music was also influenced by the war in Vietnam. The music of Leonard Bernstein and Richard Wernick are two notable examples. How does this music reflect the political controversies of the time? Which music and/or artists seem to be most important and why? How is this music or the themes in this music reflected in the literature of the Vietnam War?
6. Dance was not exempt from the Vietnam War. Yvonne Rainer and others were influenced by the war. How did dance reflect the issues surrounding the Vietnam War? Which artists seem to be most important and why? How are the themes of dance reflected in the literature of the War?
7. As early as 1972, some pop music began to deal with a new issue, the Vietnam veteran. How is this issue reflected in the music of artists like Marvin Gay and Curtis Mayfield, and how is this subject treated in pop music of the 1980s? How is this music reflected in the literature of the Vietnam War? How does it reflect changing attitudes toward the war and Vietnam veterans? Which artists and/or music seem most important in terms of this issue? Why?
8. The visual art produced by combat artists during the war and that produced by Vietnam veterans and other American and Vietnamese artists depict the war and its aftermath in striking ways. How does this art depict the war and its aftermath? Which works and/or artists seem most important? Why? How are these views of the war reflected in the

literature? How do they reflect the controversies or issues of the time or changing attitudes toward the war?

9. Popular music in the 1980's illustrates new attitudes toward and views of the Vietnam War and those who served in the war. How does this music see the war in Vietnam and the Vietnam veteran? Which songs and/or artists seem most important in this regard? Why? How does this music reflect the change in attitudes and views in society? How is this music reflected in the literature of the Vietnam War?
10. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D. C. has been called everything from the"black ditch" to a powerful work of art. How does this memorial reflect the lingering wounds of the Vietnam War? What is your assessment of this Memorial? Is it a "black gash of shame" or a work of art that has the potential to help heal the wounds of the war? How is the controversy over the memorial and/or the meaning of the memorial reflected in the literature of the Vietnam War?
11. Since the early days of the war documentary films and television programs have dealt with a number of issues and controversies of the war. Some of these films and programs have won critical acclaim, influenced public opinion and brought about public awareness of issues related to the war. Which of these films and/or television programs are most important? Why? How are the issues, themes, and/or controversies dealt with in these films and programs reflected in the literature of the Vietnam War?
12. Directly or indirectly popular films and television shows have dealt with the war since the mid 1960's. In fact, as with rock music, these films and television shows not only reflect the political controversies, but also reflect changing attitudes toward the war and in the Vietnam veteran. Select a time period, such as 1964-72, 1973-1982, or 1983-1993, and answer the following questions about the feature films and/or weekly televison shows of that time period. How do the feature films and/or weekly television shows portray the Vietnam War? How do these works reflect the political controversies of the time? Which films and/or television programs seem to be most important? Why? How are the issues, themes, controversies, and views of the war reflected in Vietnam War literature?
13. From the early days of the war with plays such as "MacBird!" and "Viet Rock" to recent popular productions such as Cameron Mackintosh's "Miss Saigon," the theater has dealt with the Vietnam War. How do the plays during the Vietnam War reflect the political controversies of the time? How have Vietnam veterans and others portrayed the war and its aftermath? Which playwrights and/or plays seem to be most important and why? How are the political controversies or themes and issues in in these dramas reflected in the fiction of the Vietnam War?
14. The music that was written, sung and recorded by soldiers and civilians who served in Vietnam depict the war in striking ways. How does this music, such as the songs collected and recently released in the album, In Country: Folk Songs of Americans in the Vietnam War depict the war? Which songs and/or artists seem most important? Why? How are these views of the war reflected in the literature of the war?

Adapted from Johannessen, L. R., 1997. "Fostering Response to Vietnam War Literature through the Arts." *English Journal*, 86.5: 57-62.

One Picture Says 40,000 Words

The Problem:

In hopes of promoting the reading of books among school-age children, the National Library Association (NLA) has initiated "National Book Month," Naming November as the target month. The NLA has invited publishers of popular texts to produce attractive posters to encourage students to read their books. The publishers have much to gain from having their posters appear in school and public libraries.

The publisher of Walter Dean Myers'' popular Vietnam War novel, *Fallen Angels* has been working on its poster contribution. The publisher's marketing department has selected four graphic images from which a management team will select one image or a set of images to represent the novel and appeal to high school age students to read it.

Critical Comments and Images:

See the attached images, and study the larger color reproductions to provide the information necessary to make your decision. See also the various capsule descriptions of the text that various critics and commentators have offered.

Selection Criteria:

The management team will rely on more than their gut reactions either to select from among the four samples, or to choose up to four images to represent the essence of *Fallen Angeles*. The following guidelines should influence the team decision:

1. This image or images should accurately represent the content of the novel.
2. The image or images should have visual appeal to the young reader.
3. The image or images should have the potential to influence adolescents to read the novel.
4. The image or images should follow sound design principles.

Directions:

1. Working on your own, closely study the four sample pictures to judge for yourself which would be the best selection. Be prepared to explain to others why you selected the one(s) you did.
2. Meet with two or three members of your class to discuss your observations. As members of the management team, you must come to a group decision, even though there will be some disagreement among the group. Be prepared to report to the whole class: Which image(s) did you select? How did you arrive at your decision? If there was disagreement within your group, what was the basis for the disagreement?
3. A spokesperson from each group will share the group decision and rationale. Everyone is invited to challenge the reported decisions and/or explanations. Each group will have an opportunity to respond to challenges or questions. Carefully note decisions, explanations, challenges, and responses. Use all comments as a means for measuring the logic, accuracy, and clarity of your own position.

4. Produce a written response to the problem. See the guidelines below.

Written Response:

Report your own decision in a memo addressed to Ms. Sang Nguyen-Westmoreland, Director of Marketing. Your memo should include the following:

1. Offer a statement about the problem you've studied, and make an assertion about which image or images should be selected.

2. Provide a complete rationale for your decision. Refer to the selection criteria and point out details from the image which show that it meets the criteria. Keep challenges in mind so that you can adequately respond to any doubts.

3. Assess the remaining choices. If other thinkers have opposed your view, explain what they chose, why they chose it, and what is lacking in their choice.

4. Summarize your decision.

Critical Comments about Walter Dean Myers' *Fallen Angels*

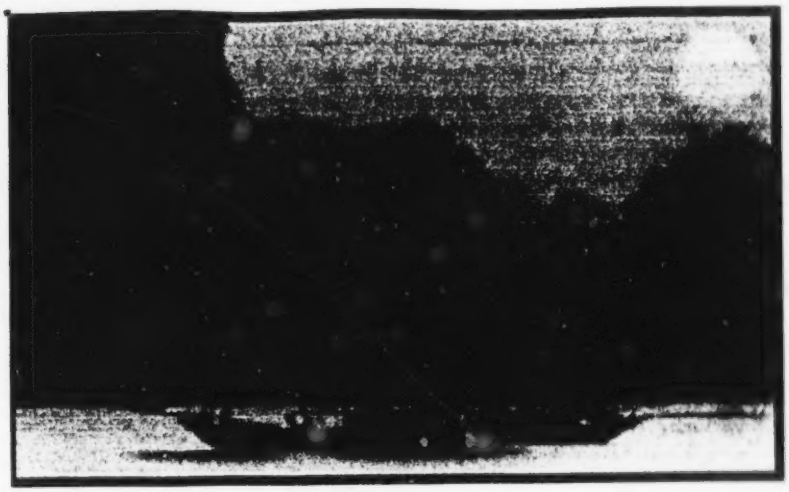
1. A coming of age tale for young adults set in the trenches of the Vietnam War in the late 1960s, Fallen Angels is the story of Richard Perry, a Harlem teenager who volunteers for the service when his dream of attending college falls through. Sent to the front lines, Perry and his platoon come face-to-face with the Vietcong and the real horror of warfare. But violence and death aren't the only hardships. As Perry struggles to find virtue in himself and his comrades, he questions why black troops are given the most dangerous assignments, and why the U.S. is there at all.

2. Rich in characters and authentic in detail, *Fallen Angels* tells the story of a 17-year-old black teenager's tour of duty in Vietnam in 1967. With its gritty and authentic depiction of the brutality of war it has been acclaimed by critics and young adult readers alike.

3. This book is about Rich Perry (main character) and his soldier buddies who were in his platoon. It talks about what soldiers had to do in order for them to stay alive and survive in the "bush." Whenever Rich and his platoon are in a fire fight, it makes you feel like you were there taking a video or taking pictures while they were fighting their enemies. This book really gets very exciting, especially in the parts when Rich and two other soldier buddies almost died. There is so much action in this book it makes Rambo look like Dumbo. It gets interesting whenever Rich and his platoon are just kicking back because they always make fun of each other. When they make fun of each other, it makes them feel like they are not even at war and it also makes them forget about what they've experienced while in a fire fight.

4. A very powerful Vietnam War novel written for teenagers, *Fallen Angels* tells the story of Richie Perry, 17, who enlists to fight in Vietnam as a way out of a dead-end life in Harlem. He experiences all of the horrors of war as well as the racial conflict that existed among American troops. Richie questions his religious faith and moral values.

Adapted from an activity created and presented by McCann, Thomas M. (1999, Feb. 17). "Inquiry-Based Interdisciplinary Lessons." Paper presented for graduate education students in the Ethics, Education, and Social Change Course, Barat College, Lake Forest, IL.



"Boat at Sunrise" Acrylic Painting
Harlan Garver

"Tail Gunner" Pen and ink
James Polloack

"Walking Point" Pen and ink
Melanie Stube

"Sniper" Watercolor Painting
Kim Lau

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The Platoon Commander's Dilemma

During the Vietnam War, Second Lieutenant John Pickett was an infantry platoon commander in a company that was operating in the Hiep Duc Valley area, Quang Tin Province in the I Corp Tactical Zone. The company had recently moved into this area that had been an enemy stronghold for many years. As a soldier he was taught that he must obey all orders of his superior officers. To disobey is a crime.

While his company was searching the village of Nui Chom, one of Pickett's men set off a booby trap that killed two men and badly wounded a third. A hasty investigation by the company commander, Captain Jose Juarez, uncovered evidence that the village was inhabited by only women and children and also pointed to a woman and her eleven-year old child as the possible culprits. Juarez ordered Pickett to shoot the woman and her son to make an example of them.

Pickett was appalled at the idea of killing women and children, especially when there was a chance they might be innocent. He voiced his opinion, but his company commander, his superior officer, said that as a good soldier he must follow orders. He told Pickett that he owed more loyalty to his fellow soldiers than to a bunch of murdering enemy villagers. Pickett looked down at the torn bodies of his dead and wounded troopers and thought about how they had carried out his orders without question for the past few months. Maybe he did owe them something more.

Pickett walked over to the woman and her son who were tied up and squatting on the ground. He took out his pistol and put it to the woman's head. She and her young son began crying and whimpering something in Vietnamese that he could not understand.

Captain Juarez joined Pickett and reminded him that with no men around, these villagers were probably the wives and children of enemy soldiers. As Pickett thought about what to do, his platoon medic told him that Smitty had just died from the wounds he received from the booby trap.

Pickett could feel the anger rise in the pit of his stomach. Now there were three men dead because of what this woman and her son may have done. Suddenly he wanted very badly to carry out the Captain's orders. As he took the safety off of the pistol, he could hear the village women and children crying and whimpering. He tightened his finger on the trigger, but then he hesitated.

Questions

What should Pickett do: refuse to kill the woman and her son or shoot them? Why is that the right thing for him to do? Do you agree with what Captain Juarez told Pickett? Why or why not?

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